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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 000001

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [MCAP](#) [MARR](#) [UG](#) [SO](#)
SUBJECT: UGANDA: THE LIMITS OF UGANDA'S AMISOM COMMITMENT

REF: 09 KAMPALA 01276; 09 KAMPALA 01322

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REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

11. (C) Summary: Uganda plans to add a fourth battalion to its contribution to the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) in February 2010, bringing the total number of Ugandan troops in Somalia to 3,500. While President Museveni would like to expand AMISOM's capability and mandate, Uganda's commitment to AMISOM and the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) is not open-ended absent political progress on the ground in Somalia. Moreover, the potential for renewed hostilities between northern and southern Sudan along Uganda's northern border, and Uganda's own general elections in February 2011 - well before the expiration of the TFG's mandate - could force a diversion of Ugandan troops and resources away from AMISOM, with negative implications for the viability of the TFG and U.S. interests in Somalia. End Summary.

Uganda Ready to Do More in Somalia...

12. (C) Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Minister of Defense Kiyonga, and other senior Ugandan leaders have repeatedly expressed interest in sending more forces to Somalia to take offensive action against al Shabaab (see reftels for background). The Ugandan People's Defense Force (UPDF) currently has three battalions totaling 2,750 peacekeepers in Mogadishu and will send another mechanized battalion of around 750 troops in February 2010. In August 2009, the AMISOM Force Commander Major General Nathan Mugisha told the DATT of Ugandan plans to drive Al Shabaab out of Mogadishu following the arrival of the UPDF's fourth battalion. Uganda intended to deploy this battalion to Somalia in November, but the deployment was delayed by the September 17 suicide attack on AMISOM headquarters in Mogadishu. In addition to troop contributions, Uganda has trained approximately 600 TFG troops. A second cohort of 661 trainees and some 30 officers will finish in March 2010. Uganda has also agreed to host European Union funded training for another 2,000 TFG troops set to begin in May 2010. According to Ugandan police, 40 TFG police officers have attended Uganda's police training academy and the Ugandan Police are prepared to train as many as 3,500 more TFG police officers in 12010.

...But Not Forever

14. (C) Ugandan officials also stress that the status quo in Somalia is not sustainable, and that Uganda will contemplate withdrawing from Mogadishu if there is no progress over the next year. They have indicated that Uganda is looking for a longer term policy and additional international support that will allow AMISOM and the TFG to defeat Al Shabaab. While highlighting the weakness and unpopularity of Al Shabaab, these officials express growing doubts that the TFG has the capacity to capitalize on either the AMISOM presence or any gains it could make. They caution that Uganda is unwilling to remain in Mogadishu indefinitely, unless the TFG develops traction as a government, can win popular support, and stand on its own two feet.

Sudan and Domestic Politics

15. (C) Two other variables that could precipitate a Ugandan withdrawal from Somalia are Sudan and Uganda's February 2011

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general elections. Although Uganda regards an unstable Somalia as a serious security threat for East Africa, Uganda's more immediate concerns focus on the Sudan. Ugandan military leaders have told DATT that war between northern and southern Sudan would likely force Uganda to divert resources from Somalia to assist the Government of Southern Sudan with logistical support. With the recent peace in northern Uganda after 23 years of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) insurgency, the GOU will be inclined to increase troops in the region if it looks like a war in southern Sudan could destabilize the area and spark more domestic unrest there

16. (C) On the domestic front, Uganda's opposition political parties believe President Museveni is using AMISOM as a hedge to soften U.S. criticism of Uganda's democratic backsliding. The leading opposition contender, Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) President Kizza Besigye, told PolOffs on December 15 that the AMISOM deployment is exacerbating an internal Somali political crisis, and questioned Uganda's motives for sending forces to Mogadishu. A December 9 editorial by a Kenya-based Ugandan journalist critical of Museveni praised the UPDF's good conduct and selfless service in Somalia, but said many see Uganda's peacekeeping mission as "part of a scheme" by Museveni to placate Western donors. As the presidential campaign proceeds, it will be difficult for Museveni to address these criticisms barring tangible progress in Somalia or the addition of other African troops to ease the burden on Uganda.

17. (C) Internal election-related security, however, is perhaps the highest priority for President Museveni. Uganda maintains one of the largest militaries in Africa, with approximately 40,000 soldiers. Museveni uses the UPDF to augment severely under-resourced police forces during moments of instability, such as the deadly September 10-12 riots in Kampala. A highly contentious and competitive 2011 presidential election campaign will likely trigger a sustained security presence throughout Uganda, possibly requiring the withdrawal of troops from the UPDF's deployment against the LRA in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Central African Republic, or from AMISOM, or both.

Comment

18. (C) The international community is focused on the end of the TFG's mandate in August 2011. Uganda, however, is focused on Sudan and Uganda's February 2011 elections. While President Museveni and other senior Ugandan leaders remain committed to AMISOM and Somalia, this commitment is not open-ended. If 2010 does not bring clear signs of progress in Somalia or additional support for AMISOM from other African nations, Uganda's willingness to remain AMISOM's lead participant could end before the expiration of the TFG's mandate.
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